WPost
6/6/68

Nation's Leaders Express Grief

By Eve Edstrom
Washington Post Staff Writer

"May God forgive and help us all."

This is now Vice President Humphrey ended a brief message yesterday—the day when the Nation again was shaken and shamed at the critical wounding of another Kennedy.

The highest and the humblest groped for words—shocking, unbelievable, dreadful, senseless—to describe Wednesday's shooting of New York Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, brother of the slain President John F. Kennedy.

But as President Johnson said: "There are no words equal to the horror of this tragedy"—the tragedy that was the aftermath of Sen. Kennedy's California primary victory.

All Democratic and Republican presidential candidates called an indefinite moratorium on politics. Many Americans, like the 4000 worshippers that overflowed St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, turned to prayer—prayer for a man and prayer for a country that, many said, "is going crazy."

"I pray that this brave and debonair man will live," said Rep. Henry X. Reuss (D-Wis.), "and that this madness shall pass from the earth."

But civil rights leader Charles Evers, whose brother Medgar was assassinated several years ago, saw little hope that America soon would be rid of the hate that sparks senseless shootings.

"I know how hate is in this country," Evers said. "I know how people are against anyone who speaks out against evil.

"Sen. Kennedy had the same idea as his brother and my brother. America is just not ready for this.

"Anyone who speaks out is subject to being killed. He will be killed."

And the Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, leader of the Poor People's Campaign, declared that "we must move quickly and resolutely to cure this national sickness before it engulfs America in final catastrophe and death."

Observing that Sen. Kennedy is one of the country's few national leaders who spoke our against hate, oppression and injustice, Mr. Abernathy said: "I'm profoundly shaken by the dangerous implication of this outrageous assault."

Senators Edward W. Brooke (R-Mass.) and Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.) among Senators who met with Mr. Abernathy at Resurrection City, expressed grief when asked if Congress had done all it could to prevent such tragedies.

Javits replied "obviously not." He asked: "What is the trouble . . . when does it end."

Mr. Abernaty noted that the shooting in Los Angeles occurred just two months after the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whom Abernathy succeeded as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Mrs. King, before departing for Los Angeles to be with the Kennedy family, sent the following telegram to Mrs. Kennedy:

"I am praying for your husband, whom I so much respect, and I am praying for our country in this period of great national tragedy and peril.

"You, your husband, and your entire family have been most comforting to my family in our times of grief and difficulty, and I am prepared to do anything which may be of some service or consolation to you now."

In Washington, New York Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller, an active contender for the Republican presidential nomination, canceled a breakfast meeting with congressional leaders and a luncheon appearance at the National Press Club.

He returned to Albany where he told newsmen that "all Americans of good will are stunned and appalled. What strikes any one of us. strikes all of us. We are gravely wounded.

Front-running candidate for the GOP presidential nomination, Richard M. Nixon, canceled a Friday trip to Michigan where he was slated to address a campaign fund-raising luncheon and to meet with GOP convention delegates.

Former Alabama Gov. and Third Party presidential candidate George C. Wallace called off a three-day campaign swing into New England and Maryland. Wallace said he did so "out of respect for Sen. Kennedy and his family."

Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy (D-Wis.), who had lost out to Kennedy in the California primary, said he was suspending all political activity indefinitely.

"No words could fully convey the feeling I have toward the Kennedy family at this time of their tragedy," he said. "It is not enough to say this is the act of one deranged man if that is the case. The Nation, I think, bears too great a burden of guilt for this kind of violence here in our own land."